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GHOST RIDER
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MOTORCYCLE STUNTMAN JOHNNY BLAZE HAS ALWAYS HAD HIS HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE... AND MADE ALL THE WRONG DECISIONS.

NOW HE'S GONE AND DONE IT AGAIN.

WHILE TRAPPED IN HELL, JOHNNY MADE A BARGAIN TO ESCAPE AND INADVERTENTLY FREED LUCIFER IN THE PROCESS. THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS' BODY BROKE APART ON THE WAY TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND SCATTERED INTO 666 PIECES, EACH OF WHICH POSSESSED A RECENTLY DECEASED MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD. NOW, THOSE CORPSES HAVE REANIMATED UNDER LUCIFER'S CONTROL AND ARE WREAKING HAVOC UPON THE EARTH.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, FOR EACH REANIMATED CORPSE THAT GHOST RIDER DEFEATS, EVERY OTHER WILL INCREASE IN STRENGTH AND POWERS. WHEN ONLY ONE REMAINS, IT WILL BE A BEING OF SUCH IMMENSE POWER THAT NONE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND IN ITS WAY!

THIS WHOLE MESS STARTED THE DAY THAT JOHNNY BLAZE GOT SENT TO HELL, A STORY THAT HAS NEVER BEEN TOLD. UNTIL NOW...

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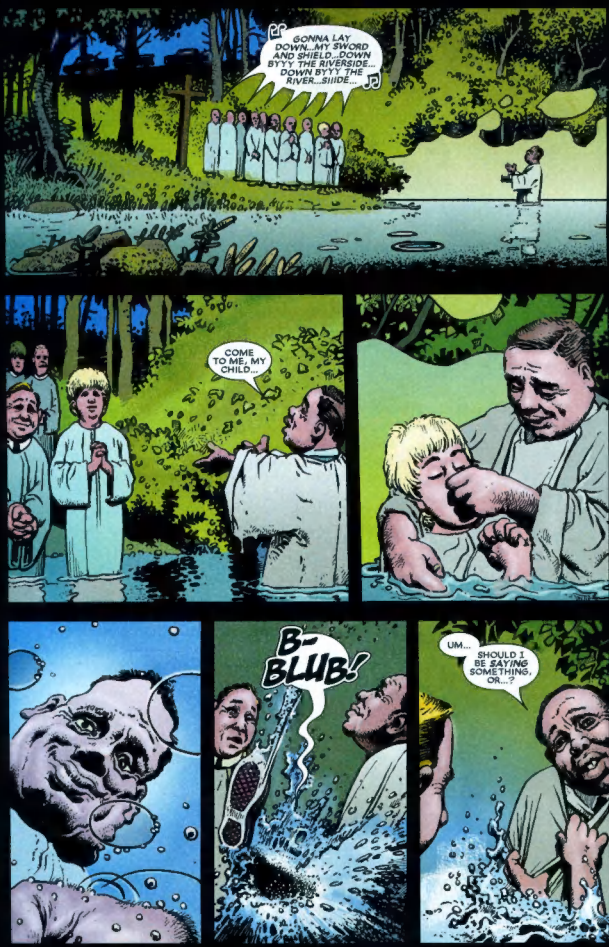
GONNA LAY DOWN...MY SWORD AND SHIELD...DOWN BYYY THE RIVERSIDE... DOWN BYYY THE RIVER...SIIIDE...
COME TO ME, MY CHILD...
B-BLUB!
UM... SHOULD I BE SAYING SOMETHING, OR...?

W--?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
HEY, NOW-- TAKE IT EASY, BUDDY...I'M KINDA NEW AT THIS.
JUST GIMME A COUPLE TRIES AND I'LL HAVE THIS DOWN, OKAY?
SO, WHO'S NEXT...?
FWWWIN0000555HHHH!

HELL TO PAY
PART ONE
YOU.
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ARTIST
JOSE VILLARRUBIA
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VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA
LETTERS
MICHAEL O'CONNOR
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EDITOR
JOE QUESADA
EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY
PUBLISHER

UH-UH.
THAT'S NOT GONNA WORK, JOHNNY--
CKCH-CHANK!
...NOT THIS TIME!
WARRAKKKI
HOW...?
HE'S STRONGER... MORE POWERFUL THAN LAST TIME--
GET UP.

--HEAR ME, BOY?
I SAID...
--GET UP!
KRAK!
Near Lynchburg, Tennessee. A Long Time Ago...
WHAT'S YER NAME, BOY?
J-JOHN... JOHN BLAZE.
WHAT'S GOIN'--?
"BLAZE," HUH?
YOU BEEN BLAZIN' SOMETHIN' BEHIND THAT BUSH THERE? THAT WHY YOU PASSED OUT, YOU LOW-LIFE PIECE O' SCOOTER TRASH?
N-NO! I WAS JUST--!
GET DOWN ON THE GROUND, NOW.
BUT... YOU JUST TOLD ME TO STAND--!
KRAK!
YOU GOIN' TO JAIL, BOY!
FOR WHAT?!
RESISTIN' ARREST

AH, FER...
POLICE
POLICE BEAT
AIN'T THERE ANY OTHER CELLS?
OTHER ONE'S GOT A BUSTED TOILET... AN' I AIN'T FIXIN' IT.
UNHOOK 'IM AN' LET'S GIT THIS DONE.
HEY, ARVIS... WHAT'S UP?
CH-CHANK!
KLAKK!
YOU KNOW THAT GUY?
I KNOW HIS KIND...
SO, YOU'RE A RIDER, HUH?

EDUCATED GUESS: CHAPPED KNUCKLES, THE WAY YOUR BOOTS ARE SCUFFED...
WHAT DO YOU RIDE?
OH...
IT'S, UH...
...IT'S A CUSTOM JOB.
GOOD MAN.
SET OF WHEELS OUGHTTA BE A REFLECTION OF THE MAN WHO RIDES IT, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
YEAH...
WELL, HOPEFULLY THEY'LL CAN A FEW MORE SUSPECTS BEFORE THE NIGHT'S OUT...
...OTHERWISE, IT'LL BE DOWN TO EITHER YOU OR ME GETTIN' SENT OFF TO CON COLLEGE WITH A FULL SCHOLARSHIP.
HOLD ON-- WHAT?
...YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW?

FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD THROUGH THE BARS, SOUNDS LIKE TONIGHT SOME LOCAL BARTENDER GOT HIMSELF SHOT RIGHT THROUGH THE HEAD.
NO WITNESSES.
COPS ARE ROUNDING UP ALL THE "UNDESIRABLES"--- DRIFTERS LIKE YOU AND ME, MOSTLY---AND LOCKIN' 'EM UP UNTIL THEY FIND THEIR MAN.
OR, IF THAT DOESN'T WORK OUT, A MAN...IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
OH.
"OH"? THAT'S IT?
THAT DOESN'T CONCERN YOU? THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU MAD?
I DON'T... GET MAD, NOT ANYMORE.
BAD THINGS HAPPEN.
I CAN DIG THAT.
YOU'VE "TAMED YOUR INNER DEMONS," HUH?
MORE OR LESS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU DON'T SEEM VERY CONCERNED, EITHER.
YEAH, WELL...
...I HAVE A HELLUVA LAWYER.

MY NAME'S JOHNNY, BY THE WAY.
OH...CLAY. GOOD TO MEET--
DID YOU KILL THAT MAN, CLAY...
...OR ARE YOU TRULY INNOCENT?
I...NEVER SAID I WAS...INNOCENT.
BUT I DID NOT KILL THAT BARTENDER.
SORRY. HAD TO ASK.
THAT'S, UH, THAT'S COOL, MAN--I UNDERSTAND.
HEH...

"HELLUVA GRIP YOU GOT THERE..."
GNK--!
WHERE'S THE FURY, JOHNNY?
WHERE'S THE--
--VENGEANCE?
WWARROOKKKK!

KRAK!
KRAK!
SNAP!
YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT YOU ASK FOR.
HMM...
DIDN'T I USE THAT LINE ON YOU ONCE?

FFWWW.OOFFF!

FFUMP!
I CAN ACTUALLY FEEL THE FAT SIZZLING.

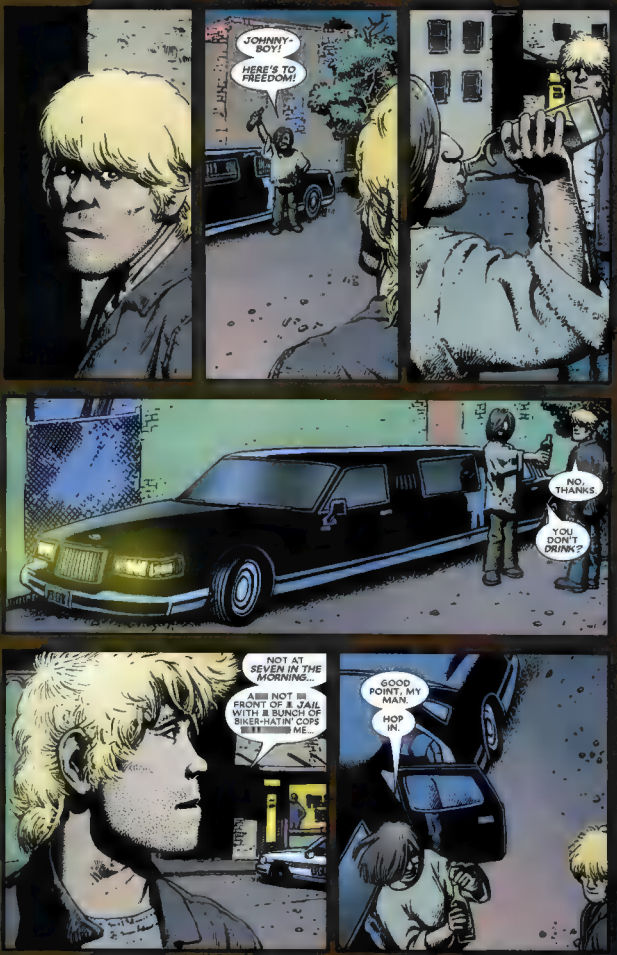
KRAKK
AHAHAAHHH!

SUCKERED YOU IN AGAIN, JOHNNY--WHY DOES THAT ALWAYS HAPPEN?
OH, I KNOW...IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A--
GULLIBLE...
WHAKK!
WEAK-MINDED...
WROKK!
...FOOL!
KROKK!

NO.
IT'S BECAUSE I'VE [redacted] HOLDING BACK.
BEEN HOLDING IT BACK...BECAUSE I DON'T WANT IT TO TAKE OVER.
BUT I CAN SEE THAT THAT'S NOT GONNA WORK ANYMORE
!
IF I'M [redacted] HAVE [redacted] CHANCE AT ALL AGAINST YOU, LUCIFER-- ANY CHANCE OF TAKING YOU [redacted] TO HELL ONCE AND FOR ALL--I GOTTA GO AT IT FULL-THROTTLE.
I GOTTA LET IT OUT.

SQUEEEEEEEEEE
YER OUTTA HERE.
FOLLOW ME--GOTTA DO SOME PAPERWORK FIRST.

LEAVIN' TOWN?
CAN I...?
YOU CAN TRY...
GUESS I'LL BE STICKIN' AROUND FOR AWHILE, THEN.
A'RIGHT, THEN...
...SEE Y'AROUND.


JOHNNY-BOY!
HERE'S TO FREEDOM!
NO, THANKS.
YOU DON'T DRINK?
NOT AT SEVEN IN THE MORNING...
A NOT IN FRONT OF A JAIL WITH A BUNCH OF BIKER-HATIN' COPS ME.
GOOD POINT, MY MAN.
HOP IN.

JOHNNY...
...MEET MR. BEDELSTRAUM.
HE'S MY LAWYER--THE ONE I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU--
I'LL GET TO THE POINT, JOHNNY:
WE NEED YOUR HELP.

[redacted] TO THE POINT, I BELIEVE WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER.
CLAY HAS INFORMED ME THAT, DUE TO YOUR CURRENT PREDICAMENT, YOU'D LIKE TO RETAIN MY SERVICES...?
HE HAS. HUH?
DUDE, YOU NEED A LAWYER.
YEAH. I DO. BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY M--
I AGREE TO HANDLE YOUR CASE.
AS FAR AS PAYMENT, I'M WILLING TO ACCEPT AN EXCHANGE OF SERVICES IN LIEU OF A MONETARY FEE.
...HUH?
CLAY NEEDS AN ALIBI, JOHNNY...
...AND, IN EXCHANGE FOR REPRESENTING YOU, WE'D LIKE YOU TO PROVIDE HIM WITH [redacted].
ISN'T THAT... ILLEGAL?

NO MORE ILLEGAL THAN THAT PIG, ARVIS, BEATING THE HELL OUT OF YOU...
YEAH, I GUESS...
JOHNNY, LOOK--THERE'S NO WAY EITHER OF US IS GOING TO GET ANYTHING A FAIR TRIAL IN THIS TOWN...YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
JUST WHAT HE SAY'S AND WE'LL BOTH RIDE OUTTA HERE FREE--
I'LL DO IT.
RIGHT ON!
AND DON'T WORRY, MAN--BEDELSTRAUM WILL GET THIS TAKEN CARE OF WITHOUT A PROBLEM...I GUARANTEE IT.
YEAH, WELL... LOOKIN' AT THIS CAR, I'M ALREADY PRETTY SURE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING...
..WHAT?
JOHNNY, THIS ISN'T HIS CAR--IT'S MINE.
I KNOW I MIGHT LOOK LIKE A DIRTBAG--AND I KINDA ACT LIKE ONE, TOO...BUT THAT'S BY CHOICE.

I ACTUALLY HOLD A, UH, LOFTY POSITION WITH A CERTAIN FRATERNAL ORDER.
HLSANGLS
YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD OF IT...?
To Be Continued...

GHOST

Welcome back, Ghosty fans! We're honored to have comics legend Richard Corben working his magic on this issue and the next one for us. And fans of Tex and Jarv need not worry; the boys will be back with issue #8, which kick-starts our long-awaited tie-in to Civil War. Lots of Ghosty goodness in the cards, my friends, but before we get ahead of ourselves, let's see what your fellow fans thought of the first arc, "Vicious Cycle," as they gear up for more.

Dear Ghost Writer/Rider Team,

In issue #3 you guys proclaimed me the #1 GR fan. I had to laugh. You made me the happiest fan on the planet. I had to laugh because of the flurry of letters that poured into your mailbox from all the other Flameheads out there. I didn't laugh out of scorn or challenge, but out of joy from seeing so many of us gather in brotherhood instead of competition. Everyone is showing their love for a hero who has been absent for far too long.

Am I the #1 GR fan? I don't care, because even if I am "toppled," I'll always have the satisfaction of being declared #1 first and witnessing my fellow Flameheads come out of the woodwork to show support of your work. And it's tough at the top, because all the fanboys at my local comic shop are expecting me to set my skull on fire.

However, I do think that I have one GR collectible that no one else can match: a custom Godzilla figure with the Seal of Vengeance tattooed across his stomach and chest. That's two, count 'em *two*, Marvel titans in one!

Thank you for my fifteen seconds in the spotlight and for returning our hero.

Sean McGuinness

Sean, you may not have held the GR fan crown for long, but you're #1 when it comes to being a classy guy. And hey, thanks for the awesome Godzilla pic. It makes me wonder, which is hotter: hellfire or atomic breath?

Hey Ghost Rider Posse,

This is the first letter I have ever written to any editor of any publication. I feel the time has come for me to take up the pen (or keyboard in this case) and have writers read what I have to say.

FANTASTIC FRICKIN' JOB! The new series you have put together is blowing my mind so far!

Now, I just recently got back into reading comics. Back in the early 90's when I was like 7 or 8, my mom would let me go to the comic store and pick out books and then she would read them to me. Well, I got the Ghost Rider series that came out in '92, and I loved it. I look back and am kind of shocked though.

It was all about selling your soul to the devil and taking vengeance on wrongdoers! And my mom actually read them to me! Ha-ha! She bred me into a true Ghost Rider fan.

Of course, other things arose in my life and I "grew up," you know, so it kinda drifted. Well, as destiny would have it, I found my old books and decided it was time to go back to the comic store. I found the hardcover of THE ROAD TO DAMNATION series and started fiending. And then I discovered this new series, and it's like crack. I actually get angry when I'm done with the latest issues, because I don't want to wait to read the rest of the story. Everyone involved in this series is doing their job extremely well and I feel you all need a raise.

You are certainly keeping this GR fan satisfied and anxious about the next release. Keep 'em coming.

Kyle C.
West Palm Beach

Any mother who will read a comic book about a skeleton biker from Hell to her son at bedtime clearly isn't parenting from some stupid self-help manual. Your mom has earned an official tip of the Flaming Skull from all of us here at Marvel.

Dear Ghost-Writers:

I just wanted to say that I've been reading the new Ghost Rider series since #1 and now that I've finished reading #5, it feels like I've been introduced to Johnny Blaze all over again. It's almost as if I was reading an Ultimate comic but without being totally separated from the familiar Marvel Universe.

To make this short and sweet, I just wanted to say that I became familiar with the original Ghost Rider when I was a toddler and was a fan of Dan Ketch. (Where is he?) And now, it feels like I'm in for the ride of my life all over again. Thank you. So until it's the end of the road for Johnny Blaze, (like that's gonna happen) Make Mine Marvel!

Albert Evans

No one knows where Danny Ketch is, Albert. I'm sure he'll pop up again someday, but for the foreseeable future, Johnny is the one and only rider.

Ghost Writers,

Just finished up Ghost Rider #3 and #4 and I think it is "Amazing" that every week when I sit down to read new comics, instead of going for the big guys like Spider-Man and Batman, I now look forward to reading Ghost Rider and Moon Knight. Most people would call these characters second or maybe third tier heroes, but hey, who outside of comics really knew who Blade was before 1995?

I think times are changing and it's very refreshing to read well-written stories with "fantastic" artwork to boot! Keep up the excellent work on both of these books.

Thanks,
Mike Dudley
Dickson, TN

What an "Uncanny" letter you've written us, Mike! There are people out there who actually prefer the little guys like Ghost Rider and Moon Knight to the big stars in comicdom? Go figure! Actually, it's a funny thing, because I work on both the Spider-Man and Wolverine books as well, and I have to state something for the record: Ghost Rider fans are the most passionate and dedicated I've seen. (I'm going to be in so much trouble on the* Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man *letters page now!)

To the Ghost Rider Crew,

"Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!"

You know, I all but turned my back on Marvel and comics for that matter. Why, you ask? Well, let's see: The Punisher became a vengeful angel with plasma rifles (I started scrubbing my eyes with a Brillo pad after that), Johnny Blaze became half-man, half-machine, all-crap, Danny Ketch was his long lost secret lov...errr, brother!? And what the heck was up with that red jumpsuit? Talk about a fall from grace for old Flamehead! I bet you could hear the loud thud he made down in hell from St. Peter's gate. Because of *Ghost Rider Resurrection*, I started collecting comics and I followed the character all the way through the *Midnight Sons* story arc and the *Spirits of Vengeance* launch, until I just couldn't stomach anymore.

I was surprised to see in the mini-series, *Road to Damnation*, (freakin' awesome by the way, thanks to Clayton Crain and Garth Ennis) that Ghost Rider actually wanted to get out of hell, especially after what some creative teams had done to him. Imagine my surprise...no, wait, you don't have to! I had a grin from ear-to-ear when I walked into a comic shop, (and they are very scarce these days) to see a new Ghost Rider ongoing series, with the old logo, and instantly recognized the artwork. Thanks for bringing back Mark Texeira and Javier Saltares to re-resurrect the Ghost Rider.

WRITERS

Sincerely,
Antonio Romero

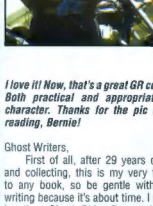
Marvel has certainly been through some... um, interesting times, Antonio, and we're glad that you stuck it through with us as long as you did. And if you ever find yourself ready to go for the Brillo pad again, write in and let us know what we're doing wrong!

Hey Flameheads,

I am so excited to see Ghost Rider in a new monthly, and glad to see Johnny Blaze back in the saddle of a Hellfire V-twin. I was a fan of the original Blaze G.R. growing up and when that series ended, I was disappointed. I tried to get into the Dan Ketch G.R., but I couldn't. It just wasn't the same. Now, Johnny Blaze is back and it's like a gift from the netherworld. I can't wait to see what future issues bring. Everyone there is doing a great job with the book. Thank you!

Since I was into bikes as a kid, I was instantly drawn to Ghost Rider. The pics you see are of a vest that I actually wear while riding. I had it made a few years ago. It's among the many GR collectibles I have. Mine will always be Marvel!!!

Thanks again,
Burnin' Bernie Giordano



I love it! Now, that's a great GR collectible! Both practical and appropriate to the character. Thanks for the pic and keep reading, Bernie!

Ghost Writers,

First of all, after 29 years of reading and collecting, this is my very first letter to any book, so be gentle with me. I'm writing because it's about time. I am a very longtime Ghost Rider Fan, and I am so glad you guys finally brought back the **ONE TRUE** Ghost Rider. It just wasn't the same without Johnny Blaze. The story is great so far, and I hope we can keep it up for many years to come. Or at least till we find out how strong Satan will be when Ghosty gets that 665th kill.

Now to the questions and I've only got two of them:

1) Will we be seeing more JB at some point in the future? So far we've really only seen GR.

2) When will there be a *Marvel Masterworks* Ghost Rider?

It would also be interesting to pick up right after issue #81 of the original series and maybe even bring back the Soul-Eater or Steel-Wind.

Well, thanks for listening to an old fan ramble....so, until GR's flames grow dim.... make mine Marvel.

Rich
BMT, Tex

Rich, as you just saw in this issue, we definitely have plans for Johnny. He's the heart and soul of the Ghost Rider, so he'll be getting plenty of "screen time" in the future as he has to cope with the Rider's dirty work. As for Marvel Masterworks, ***there aren't any plans at the moment, but keep an eye out for the*** Essential ***line of Ghost Rider reprints and the*** Ghost Rider Finale, ***which prints the long-lost Danny Ketch*** Ghost Rider #94 ***for the first time ever.***

Ghost Rider Team,

My name is Bryan Steele, and this is the second time I have ever written to Marvel. The first time was way back in April of '92 for issue #24 of the second volume of the Ghost Rider series...when I was fifteen years old. Now here I am again, a professional writer and game designer with over two dozen bibliography credits of my own and I owe it all to the imagination that Marvel comic books helped to cultivate and hone when I was growing up. Throughout the years, Ghost Rider has remained my favorite.

So, here it is in 2006 and my friends start talking about their comics and I stroll down to the local shop and find the first two issues of the new Ghost Rider series! I'm hooked once again, and the local shop is happy to have my money once again. I don't mind giving it either, you guys are really doing a good job with the new tale... and I'm hungry for more!

I only have one minor question...when are you going to show us where the Rider falls in the Civil War series? If there is anyone that should be pretty passionate about all the craziness going on between the supers, I would think it would be Blaze!

Keep up the good work, and get in touch if you ever need an additional writer for the Ghost Rider stuff! *wink* Until then, (and likely beyond) Make Mine Marvel!

Thanks for decades of enjoyment,
Bry

Yes indeedy, Bryan! We will be tying in with Civil War, but it will have very little to do with the Super-Human Registration Act. Johnny's got more important things to worry about right now. Check out Ghost Rider #8 ***in two months to see what I mean.***

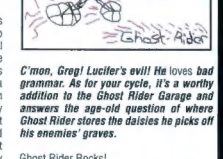
Dear Editors,

Lucifer said, "I mean, if she wasn't dead..." in *Ghost Rider #5* of this new series. Everyone knows that when you're using an "if" or "wish" sentence, you use "were" instead of "was." For example...

"I wish I were a better artist. If I were, I would've drawn a better motorcycle."

Other than that, this new series is unbelievable. It was enough to get me back into comics after more than 10 years out of the comic book loop. Keep up the good work. I've attached my version of Ghost Rider's new cycle. I may not be the best artist in the world, but great ideas like streamers and a flower basket more than make up for my crappy MS Paint skills.

Greg Leeson
Dunmore, PA



C'mon, Greg! Lucifer's evil! He loves ***bad grammar. As for your cycle, it's a worthy addition to the Ghost Rider Garage and answers the age-old question of where Ghost Rider stores the daisies he picks off his enemies' graves.***

Ghost Rider Rocks!

Thank you for bringing back Ghost Rider! I am deaf and first read Ghost Rider back in 1992 when my roommate asked me for a ride to a comic store I hadn't been to since I was a child collecting Groo & GI-Joe comics. I went inside, looked around, and saw Ghost Rider issues, and that got my attention right away. I started collecting them all and have loved it ever since!

I want to ask my girlfriend something, if you would print this in "Ghost Writers." She is a great woman and we have a child together.

Julia, will you marry me?

Scott Vela "ZiNg"
Amarillo, TX

Wow! Zing, indeed! Well, Julia, what do you say?

Another stunning edition of Ghost Writers and we didn't even have a tattoo this month! Of course, a letter from a real rider, a great new addition to the GR motorcycle garage, the triumphant return of Sean McGuinness, and a wedding proposal ain't too shabby! Keep writing in, Flameheads, and remember that I'm a sucker for cool photos and drawings!

--Michael

NEXT ISSUE:

THE CONCLUSION OF "HELL TO PAY"
by DANIEL WAY and RICHARD CORBEN!

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